

DAVID's *Dying Charge* to SOLOMON.

Addressed to the

12

CHILDREN of RELIGIOUS PARENTS.

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IN A

S E R M O N

T O

Y O U N G P E R S O N S.

P R E A C H E D I N

*St. Thomas's Southwark,*

DECEMBER 25, 1754,

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By HENRY READ.

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L O N D O N :

Printed for J. WAUGH and W. FENNER, in *Lombard-street*; J. BARBOR, and J. PEYTON, in *Southwark*, MDCCLV.

British Museum

Presented to the

CHILDREN of Religious Parents

STERN

YOUNG PERSONS



St Thomas's Compound

December 22 1781

W. HENRY READ

LONDON

Printed by J. WARD and W. PEARSON, in the Strand, near St. Dunstons Church, and J. PEARSON, in the Strand, near St. Dunstons Church.

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# S E R M O N.

I CHRONICLES xxviii. 9.

*And Thou Solomon, my son, know  
Thou the God of thy father, and  
serve Him with a perfect heart  
and a willing mind; for the  
Lord searcheth all hearts, and  
understandeth all the imaginati-  
ons of the thoughts, if thou seek  
him, He will be found of thee;  
but if thou forsake him, He will  
cast thee off for ever.*

**T**H E S E words are a solemn charge  
of *David*, a religious, mighty prince  
and tender father, to *Solomon*, his  
best beloved son, and heir to his crown.  
*David* was now advanced in years, and had



a near prospect of removing into the unseen world; and in these words He leaveth a dying testimony for God and Religion, which deserveth the attentive regard of all that read or hear them. Thou *Solomon*, my son, to whom I bear the nearest relation and the warmest affection, know Thou the God of thy father, acknowledge Jehovah the only true God, and have nothing to do with the Idols of the Gentiles, but cleave to Him, whom I have worshipped all my days; serve Him with a perfect heart and a willing mind; pay sincere obedience to his precepts, and keep close to his institutions, out of choice, and with delight.

To inforce this charge He addeth several weighty considerations; He is the God of thy father, whom I have chosen and served, and whom by my own long experience, I can recommend as a gracious God, the best of masters and friends; He is the searcher of all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts, and therefore nothing is concealed from him. If thou seek him heartily, He will be found of thee; he will receive thee into special favour;



favour ; but if Thou forsake Him, and turn to the worship of false gods, or to the practice of wickedness, thy relation to me will not secure thee from his displeasure, but He will cast thee off for ever.

The words lead me to observe, as the ground of my discourse, that it is the duty and interest of the children of religious parents to acknowledge and serve the God of their fathers, to be religious, and make it the business of their lives.

- I. In discoursing on this observation, I shall explain briefly the nature of religion, as it is summed up in knowing and serving the God of our fathers, with a perfect heart and a willing mind.
- II. I shall shew that this is, in a special manner, the duty of the children of religious parents, and their true interest.
- III. I shall explain and shew the force of the arguments or motives in the text.

text. And then conclude with a suitable application, by way of earnest address to parents and children.

I. I am to explain the nature of religion, as it is described or summed up in the text, by knowing and serving the God of our Fathers with a perfect heart and a willing mind.

All religion is comprehended in these two words, sound knowledge and a holy practice ; or in such a knowledge of God, as influenceth to a virtuous, pious temper and behaviour towards Him, and all with whom we have to do.

1. To know God is to acknowledge Jehovah, as the one only true God, in opposition to the false Gods and Idols of the heathens, that were no better than wood and stone, gold and silver.

*Their Idols are silver and gold, the works of men's hands, saith the Psalmist ; they have mouths, but they speak not ; eyes, but they see not ; ears, but they hear not ; they are utterly incapable of doing any thing for their stupid worshippers ; but our God is in the heavens,*

*beavens, He hath done whatsoever He pleaseth. Psal. cxv. 3, 4, &c.*

To know God, is to acknowledge his existence and glorious perfections. This lieth at the foundation of all religion, whether natural or revealed, according to that of the Apostle in *Heb. xi. 6. He that cometh unto God, must believe that He is, and that he is the rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.*

This was generally believed by the heathens themselves, and can be seriously denied by none, tho' there be many so foolish and desperately wicked, as to say in their heart, there is no God, at least, to wish there was none, to observe and punish their vices.

To know God, is to form right apprehensions of Him, according to the discovery He hath made of himself, by natural light, and the Holy Scriptures.

He is from everlasting to everlasting, a spiritual Being, every where present, omnipotent, omniscient, infinitely wise, holy, just and good; our Creator, Preserver, Governor, and Redeemer, who so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, to be



be the Savior of Sinners; and He will be our final Judge.

But we must not stop here in a bare, speculative knowledge and right apprehensions of God, but we must serve Him.

This includeth all religious worship and obedience; becoming affections and dispositions of soul; and correspondent actions. Such as high esteem; profound veneration; devout adoration; supreme trust; unfeigned love, and intire resignation; fervent prayer, and praise, and gratitude; reading and hearing his holy word; and presenting all our offerings to Him, in the name, and as the disciples of Christ, the one Mediator, by whom alone, through the Holy Spirit, we have access to the Father. *Ephes. ii. 18.*

To serve God includes also the diligent performance of all personal and relative duties, to live soberly and righteously, to do justice, and love mercy; and what we do must be done with a perfect heart and a willing mind, *i. e.* with a sincere, upright heart, devoted unfeignedly to God, making religion our judicious choice, and practising it with chearfulness and delight. But in  
order

order to the fuller understanding of the matter, I will add the following particulars.

1. A regard to God's authority and favour must be the chief spring of our religion.

He hath no religion who is not influenced by a reverence of God as his governor, and a desire to approve himself to Him; it is therefore said, *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*, and when Job had the excellent character given him of a *perfect upright man*, it immediately followeth, *one that feared God, and avoided evil.* Job, i. 2.

The scribes and pharisees, who were very exact in the outward parts of God's service, are charged with notorious hypocrisy, for want of a pious regard to God; self was the idol to which their devotion was paid; they did all that they might gain the applause of men, and advance their secular interest.

It is to be feared this is the case of many in all ages; the fear of disobliging their pious parents or friends upon whom they have a dependence, swayeth them to ap-

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pear sober and regular, till they have gained their end, and then they throw off the mask, and forsake the God of their fathers.

2. To serve God with a perfect heart, is to make no sinful reserve or exceptions, but to pay universal obedience.

An upright man will not allow himself in any wicked way, concealeth no beloved lust, desireth not to be excused from any known duty, indulgeth no criminal passion, but prays that God would cleanse him from every secret fault; and laboureth to abstain from every appearance of evil, and to gain the knowledge of the whole of his duty, that he may discharge it in the best manner. It is the language of his very soul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? I will not knowingly neglect any thing thou injoinest, how contrary soever to flesh and blood, Lord, incline my heart to keep thy precepts diligently; then shall I not be ashamed, when I have a respect to all thy commandments." Thus it is said of the parents of *John*, that *they were both righteous before God, and walked in all his statutes and ordinances blameless.*

3. We



3. We serve God with a perfect heart, and a willing mind, when religion is the matter of our deliberate choice, and is practised with chearfulness and delight.

When upon seriously considering the relation we bear to God, as a wise and gracious governor and loving father, and from a conviction of the equity and goodness of all his precepts, we fall in love with the beauty of holiness, and chuse the paths of piety and virtue, as the most reasonable, honourable and beneficial ; when it is the language of our heart, “ *I know that thy statutes are right, and I hate every false way. I delight to do thy will, O God, thy law is in my heart. The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver ; the words of thy mouth are sweeter to me than honey ; it is my meat to do the will of God.* ” This is to serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind.

4. It includes Perseverance in religion to the death, in spite of temptations and difficulties.

It is a sure evidence that our heart is sincere, when we follow God fully, and cleave

to Him with unshaken steadiness; not only when it is fashionable to make a religious profession, but also when it will expose to ridicule and persecution.

Thus holy *Paul* shewed his heart was perfect in God's service, when, though he knew that bonds and imprisonment awaited Him, He bravely declared *none of these things move me, nor do I count my life dear to me, so that I may finish my course with joy.* Acts xx. 24.

And where religion is taken up on thorough conviction and choice, and practised with delight, it will make us stedfast and unmoveable against the frowns and terrors of persecuters, and the more dangerous allurements of sensual pleasures. It will animate us to proceed with life and vigor, and be faithful to the death, in hope of the promised crown of life.

II. I proceed to the second general head, that it is our duty and interest to serve the God of our fathers with an upright heart and willing mind.

All who are dignified with intelligent faculties are obliged to acknowledge and  
serve

serve God, who has formed us for this honourable purpose. Religion is the law of our very natures, and to with-hold homage and obedience, is to rob God, degrade our heaven-born powers, and sink ourselves below the beasts ; which steadily pursue the intention of their Maker, though they know Him not.

And we are under a further, most in-dearing obligation, from the tender mercy of God in providing a Savior, to redeem us from sin and misery, and purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

These obligations are common to all under the gospel ; but the descendents of pious parents are under some peculiar obligations to own and serve Him, as He is the God of their fathers. By them you were devoted to Him, and consecrated to his service, who hath engaged to be a God to believers and their seed. You have had the privilege of a pious education, religious instructions, good examples, and fervent prayers, and by means of these advantages religion will be more easy and pleasant, and you are capable of making  
higher



higher advances in sacred knowledge and goodness, and of being more eminently useful in this life, and obtaining a higher measure of happiness in the next.

And surely it is no less your interest than your duty, to serve the God of your fathers. By this means you will perpetuate the honorable relation to God, by descent and dedication; I mean, as He was the God of your holy parents, He will be your God too, your constant benefactor and everlasting friend, than which nothing can be more to your advantage in both worlds.

III. But this brings me in the third place, to consider the propriety and force of the arguments, by which *David* inforceth his charge to *Solomon*.

*He is the God of thy father. He is the searcher of all hearts. If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee. If thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off forever.* These motives are adapted to work powerfully on all the springs of human action. I shall consider them distinctly.

1. He is the God of thy father.

This

This was a prevailing argument among the Gentiles to cleave to the false gods of their several countries, and not to impose on strangers, the worship of the gods of the nations, in which they travelled.

But it is necessary here to observe, that the God of our fathers, and the religion of our country, are by no means to be imbraced merely on that account, were not Jehovah the true God, and the religion taught by Christ, of divine appointment.—Neither *Solomon*, nor any in succeeding ages, are obliged to own and serve the God of their fathers, purely because he was the God of their fathers.

When we grow up to a capacity of understanding and judging for ourselves, we have a right to examine by reason and scripture, the religious sentiments of our ancestors, and to embrace or reject them, according to rational conviction.

But supposing we find they were in the right, and that they did well in owning and serving Jehovah, as *Solomon* firmly believed his father did, and as we are convinced our Christian parents have done, the force  
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of the argument is undeniable, which is this :

Your religious parents, upon many years trial, have found Him to be a good God, the best of friends, faithful to all his promises, and therefore they recommend Him to the choice of you their dear children, whose happiness they wish, as their own.

Upon many years experience we can attest the excellency of his service ; we have found the ways of religion to be ways of pleasantness and paths of peace ; and the more closely we have walked in them, the more satisfaction and joy hath possessed our souls. We have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious ; he hath been our refuge and strength, and a very present help in trouble, and hath never failed nor forsaken us.

Therefore because we love you, as tender parts of ourselves, we exhort, intreat, yea solemnly charge you, as you will answer it at the day of judgment, to acknowledge and serve this best of Beings, that it may be well with you forever.



2. He searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts, and therefore must be served with an upright heart and a willing mind.

He claims our hearts, and is intimately acquainted with our thoughts, and cannot be imposed on. His eye penetrates into the most secret recesses of the soul, and all things are naked and opened to his inspection. He knoweth perfectly all our latent principles, aims, and governing ends. Psal. cxxxix. 2. *Thou understandest my thoughts afar off*, before they are formed into regular thoughts. It is therefore not only wicked, but ridiculous folly to call Him Lord, and honour Him with our lips, and flatter him with our tongues, if we have not a sincere heart and a willing mind; for as He now beholdeth hypocrisy with abhorrence, He will punish it with severity, at the day of judgment. Jer. xvii. 10. *I, Jehovah, search the heart, and try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

3. If we seek Him, He will be found of us; *i. e.* He will be our God and friend, benefactor and rewarder.

If we serve Him with an upright heart, and a willing mind, He will make us the objects of his special love.

He is indeed ready to be found of all that seek Him with their whole heart; but in these words there seemeth to be something peculiarly encouraging to the children of the righteous, as the posterity of His friends. With such He usually begins to strive early by His holy Spirit in the word, and to shew a particular inclination and desire to befriend them. With them He waits that He may be gracious, as one who is loth that the offspring of his friends should be cut off from covenant- blessings. He will rejoice to be your God and father, and take a pleasure in doing you good. You shall enjoy all manner of happiness, if you cleave to Him in sincerity; He will hear your prayers, gratify all your regular desires, and never give you cause to complain that you sought Him in vain, or served Him for nought.

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4. If thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off forever.

A very awful and striking motive this, addressed to *Solomon's* fears, and containeth one of the most dreadful threatnings.

As it hath a special reference to the children of good parents, to forsake God may signify to refuse to own Him, and to chuse the God of their fathers; or to depart wickedly from Him, after having professed to own and serve Him.

We forsake the God of our fathers, when we refuse to own and serve Him, to whom we were early devoted, and to perform the engagements under which we were brought by baptismal dedication.

When the labor of our parents in training us up in Christian knowledge is thrown away, and their children are careless and thoughtless about religion, stubborn and averse to read the holy Scriptures, and bow the knee to God in secret. When they count it a heavy task and a grievous imposition, to be obliged to attend the publick worship of the Lord's-day; when they are madly bent on gratifying the lusts of the flesh,



and long to be freed from the restraints of a pious education, and with the Prodigal in the parable, to have an opportunity of withdrawing from under the eye and government of tender parents, that they may give a loose to their vicious inclinations, and have a full liberty to undo themselves.

Another thing principally meant in the text, is forsaking God, after having made profession of the true religion, and turning to the worship of idols. This was afterwards the case of *Solomon*, in some degree, thro' the inticement of his idolatrous wives.

Of this, blessed be God, our children are in no great danger ; but they too often forsake the God of their fathers by refusing to imitate their piety, and giving themselves up to wicked courses.

When they thus degenerate and do not return by a sincere repentance, they are said to forsake God, and they fall under the tremendous threatening, of being cast off by God forever ; and the certain consequence hereof is their sinking into misery, greater than *theirs* who were not favored with *their* advantages.

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Having thus considered the doctrinal part of the words, I proceed to the application of the subject.

1. From the illustrious example of *David*, let parents learn their duty, to instruct and engage their children to know and serve God.

*David* had known by sad experience, what an evil and bitter thing it was, to have partially forsaken God, by falling into gross sins, in the matter of *Bathsheba* and *Uriah*; and his repentance was as remarkable, as his sin had been notorious; He was therefore the more solicitous that *Solomon* should serve *Jehovah* with a perfect heart, and not lay a foundation of lasting repentance, as he had done. An example this, worthy the imitation of Christian parents.

Having seriously devoted your children to God, and inrolled them in the church of Christ, lead them betimes into the knowledge of their Creator and Redeemer, and endeavour to instil the principles of religion into their tender minds. Habituate them to the daily reading of the holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise  
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to salvation. Endeavour to shew them the difference between moral good and evil, virtue and vice, and to possess their minds with the reverence and love of God and the Redeemer, by familiarly talking with them; teach them to keep holy the Lord's-day, by your own example, and to take pleasure in attending public worship; instruct them early in their dependence on God, and the reasonableness, honour, and advantage of daily prayer and thanksgiving, and their need of an interest in Christ the only Savior, for pardon and acceptance. Do all you can to restrain them from bad company, lying, evil speaking, taking the name of God in vain, pride, passion, malice and revenge; and be you examples to them of every virtue, grace and duty; which is the easiest way of leading them into the practice of religion.

It was an excellent resolution of *David Psal. ci. 2. I will behave myself wisely, I will walk in my house with a perfect heart.* He well knew that the example of parents hath a mighty influence on forming the temper and manners of their children, who  
are



are not very likely to pay a due regard to those precepts, which they see their parents take no care to practise themselves.

Follow all your instructions with earnest prayer, that God would incline them to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and preserve them from the many temptations and snares to which they are exposed in an age of great corruption and degeneracy.

And when you draw nigh to another world, intreat, exhort and charge them to make religion their business; perhaps your dying words may make the deepest impression, and command their serious regard.

Tell them you have found God a good master, a loving father, and that the review of your sincerity, and the hope of your interest in his love now, and of his everlasting enjoyment in heaven, affords you the most solid pleasure.

Would parents thus recommend religion to their children, living and dying, it would greatly contribute to the holiness and happiness of the rising generation.

2. I would address those who are the children of wicked parents, who neither gave you pious instructions, nor set you a good example.

Let me intreat you to know and serve the Lord your Maker, tho' you cannot call Him the God of your father. Follow not the bad pattern they set you, but acquaint yourselves with God and religion, and devote yourselves to his service. If there be any good thoughts or inclinations in you, be not discouraged from pursuing them, by despair of God's accepting you.

Be thankful for, and cherish the good motions of the Holy Spirit, and break off your sins by sincere repentance, and yield yourselves unto God, and chuse Him for your father, and receive Christ as your Savior and Lord, and make his gospel the rule of your life. *If you seek Him, He will be found of you, and be your God and father; for He hath said, Whosoever confesseth, and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy, and those who come to Christ, he will in no wise cast out.*

3. But the words lead me to address in a particular manner, to the offspring of religious

gious parents, many of whom I have the pleasure of seeing now before me.

You have, through the favor of providence, enjoyed greater advantages than many others; be thankful for, and improve them. Consecrate yourselves to the best of Beings, and serve him with an upright heart and chearful mind. Chuse Him to be the guide of your youth, and adhere to Him as long as you live. He hath an unquestionable property in you, and rightful claim to your love and obedience; for He is your Maker, Preserver and Governor; on Him you have a constant dependence for life and breath and all things, and it is in his power to do you more good or hurt, than any in the world besides.

He is the God of your fathers, who have experienced the goodness of his service, the excellency of religion, and have with pleasure devoted you to Him. They bound themselves by solemn promise to train you up in the way in which you should go; and therefore you should look upon yourselves as devoted creatures, who cannot alienate his property, or withhold his right,

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your best obedience, without the most heinous guilt, and renouncing the blessings of his covenant.

Would you not dread to stand up in such a place as this, and declare aloud in the face of the assembly, “ I renounce my baptismal  
“ covenant, and disclaim all relation to, and  
“ interest in the God of my parents ; He  
“ shall not be my God, nor will I be his  
“ servant ; I will follow my own sensual  
“ inclinations, and gratify my fleshly lusts ;  
“ I know not Jehovah, nor will I obey his  
“ voice.”

Shocking as the thought is, you as effectually renounce the God of your fathers by a wicked life, as if you pronounced it aloud with your lips.

Can you possibly make a wiser or more beneficial choice, than to seek and serve the God of your fathers, and lead a sober, righteous and godly life ? Hath he not promised, that if you seek Him, He will be found of you, and take you into the honourable relation of children, and treat you as his sons and daughters ; that He will be your Guardian and unchangeable friend, and a  
present

present help in every time of trouble, and in every stage of life?

Will not your engaging early in his service be an happy mean of preventing much sin and remorse of conscience, and many a mischief, and of laying in for a reputable, useful life, and abundance of rational pleasure, and of preparing you to leave the world with safety and unspeakable comfort? Who can forbear wishing that he may die the death of the righteous, and be happy for ever? But this is not possible, if you turn your backs on God and religion, and chuse to go on in the broad way of sin and death.

Once more, let me put it home to the soul of every one that hears or reads this plain discourse; can you bear the tremendous thought of being cast off by God forever; of being now given up to your own hearts lusts, and rejected and condemned at the day of judgment? When your godly parents shall have the honour of a place on the right hand of the Judge, and the pleasure of seeing him smile on them, and hearing him pronounce, *Well done, good and faithful servants, enter you into your Mas-*

*ter's joy* ; do you not tremble at the very thought of being frowned away to the left, and hearing him declare, *I know you not ?* You would not be persuaded to own and serve me the God of your fathers, you turned a deaf ear to all my counsels, and disregarded all my reproofs, and threatenings and promises ; and now I cast you off forever ; *depart from me, you cursed.*

That this sad doom may be prevented, and that you may enjoy the happiness of being owned of God, together with your holy ancestors, I once more entreat, yea charge and conjure you, to acknowledge the God of your fathers, and serve Him with an upright heart, and willing mind. Do not attempt to put Him off with an empty profession, or the most specious form of godliness without the power, but be you inwardly what you outwardly appear ; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and knoweth the imaginations of the thoughts ; He cannot be imposed on, and will not bear to be mocked.

4. I would exhort those who have begun well, to proceed and follow on to know  
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the Lord, and wax stronger and stronger in His service.

Have a care of declining from your present seriousness, and leaving your first love. Let the path of your knowledge and goodness be like the morning light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day, and not as the morning cloud and early dew, that soon vanisheth away.

You live in a dangerous age, compassed with bad examples and sensual allurements; we have seen with grief, the fair blossoms of some of the branches of religious families, that gave promising hopes of the fruits of holiness, wither and fall off and disappoint our sanguine expectations.— And will you add to their numbers? Will any of you also go away and forsake the God of your fathers, and sink into infidelity or vice? God forbid! Reject temptations to it with a sacred disdain, and say with Christ's disciples, when He put the question, *will you also go away? Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.* We can never make an exchange for the better; to thee we will adhere, steadfast

stedfast and unmoved. Lord keep us by thy power, through faith unto salvation ! depart from us you evil-doers, you tempters to sin, for we are resolved to go on to serve the God of our fathers. *Their* people shall be *our* people, and *their* God *our* God.

5. I close all with a few words to those who have revolted from the God of their fathers, in any gross instances, though you have not utterly forsaken Him.

Hearken to the words of your Savior, in *Rev. ii. 5. Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ;* and no more repeat that abominable thing which God's soul hateth.

Consider your base ingratitude to God, and what will be the fatal issue of it, if persisted in. He will cast you off for ever ; and if He cast you off, you must fall a prey to the destroyer.

If an awakened conscience turns upon any, and faith, thou art the man ; if you feel any serious relenting and inclination to return, there is still ground to hope that God hath not utterly forsaken you.

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The language of his grace to you, this day is, return, O *backsliding children*, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever, only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God. Return, O *backsliding children*, and I will heal your backsliding, and receive you graciously, and love you freely. I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins and transgressions I will remember no more.

O that the language of your truly penitent hearts may be, “ behold I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God. “ Father, I have sinned against heaven, and “ deserved to be cast off for ever, but I will “ declare mine iniquity, and be sorry for “ my sin, and return to it no more. Have “ mercy upon me, O God, according to “ the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot “ out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from mine iniquities, and cleanse me “ from my sins. Create in me, O God, a “ clean heart, and renew a right spirit “ within



“ within me; cast me not away from thy  
 “ presence, take not away thy holy Spirit  
 “ from me.”

For your encouragement thus to return  
 to the God of your fathers, I shall only add,  
 He will by no means reject you; *for this is  
 a faithful saying, and worthy of all accep-  
 tation, that Christ Jesus came into the  
 world to save sinners, and the chief of sin-  
 ners, and his blood cleanseth sincere penitents  
 from all sins.*

F I N I S.



*Published by the same Author.*

*Comfort to mourning Christians.*

A SERMON occasioned by the Death  
 of his Daughter MARGARET READ,  
 who departed this Life October 7.  
 Preached in St. Thomas's Southwark,  
 October 14. 1753.

